

## **Funeral Services of U.S. Army 1st Lt. Alfred Pezzella**

Friday October 20th- Boston Logan International  
Time: 6:20PM

Viewing/Wake at Brasco & Sons Memorial Chapels:  
Saturday Oct. 21st from 12pm - 2pm  
Sunday Oct. 22nd from 12pm - 2pm

Funeral Service:  
Tuesday Oct. 24th @ 10:30  
Procession Departs for Bourne @ 11AM

Burial full Military Honors:  
V.A. Massachusetts National Cemetery in Bourne  
Time: 1:30PM

Brasco & Sons Memorial Chapels  
773 Moody Street  
Waltham, MA 02453



U.S. Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Alfred W. Pezzella, 27

The events of the 1st of August 1943 had all the stuff for a great epic war movie; tension, drama, action, tragedy and plenty of courage and self-sacrifice. One-hundred sixty-six Consolidated B-24 Liberator Bombers out of the original one-hundred seventy-eight that had started, went screaming into a target at tree top level, and like the Italian poet, Dante, were about to travel through their own inferno.

The largest bombing mission against the oil fields and refineries at Ploiesti, north of Bucharest,

Romania was called Operation TIDAL WAVE. One hundred and seventy-eight B-24 Liberators took off from Benghazi, Libya, for the raid.

In the summer of 1943, 1st Lt. Alfred W. Pezzella was assigned to 328th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 93d Bombardment Group (Heavy), 9th Air Force, and was a Bombardier on a Liberator nicknamed "Hell's Wench" (serial number 42-40999) that was one of fifty-one planes that failed to return. In fact, the first combat mission for the B-24 named "Hell's Wench" would be her last. And for all her crew, several of whom who had already cheated death by flying 25 missions, their luck ran out over Ploesti.

Of the five men who were flying on "Hell's Wench", were the Bombardier Lt. Alfred W. Pezzella and Lt. George "Bud" Reuter the Navigator for the mission. They had started off flying in B-17's with the 92nd Bombardment Group. One guided the plane to the target, the other was responsible for dropping the bombs on the target.

Sometime in 1942, Pezzella and Reuter, who flew in separate crews, were transferred to the 93rd Bombardment group consisting of B-24 Liberator Bombers. There, both men were assigned to fly together. Like many Bombardiers and Navigators who spent hours in the cramped nose of a bomber, the Italian/American from the Boston area, and the German/American from rural southern Indiana became friends. Pezzella and Reuter would join a B-24 crew that had three other men who would eventually share their ultimate fate: Sergeants Edgar C. Faith, Charles E. Bennett, and Morton O. Stafford.

The mission required them to attack targets from unprecedented low altitudes of 100-300 feet. American officials believed low-altitude bombing would be much more precise and would also minimize civilian casualties. It was a daring plan that also proved costly in terms of American lives.

When the Operation TIDAL WAVE aircraft arrived over Ploiesti, pilots were surprised to find German defenders expecting them. Hovering above the city were large barrage balloons, tethered with metal cables. The Germans had also placed anti-aircraft guns along railroad tracks leading to the refineries, amongst the oil tanks themselves, and in fields outside of town. Finally, the Germans opened smoke pots in the fields and set oil tanks around the refineries aflame, sending dense clouds of black smoke to blind the bombers.

Despite the challenges of the mission and after being hit by enemy anti-aircraft fire, they succeeded in releasing their bombs on the target. They continued to try and give the plane more altitude so the crew members could bail out, but the fire in the ship became so intense that it made further progress impossible. They crashed into the target area, killing everyone on board.

The crew's remains were not identified following the war. The remains that could not be identified were buried as Unknowns in the Hero Section of the Civilian and Military Cemetery of Bolovan, Ploiesti, Prahova, Romania.

Following the war, the American Graves Registration Command (AGRC), the organization that searched for and recovered fallen American personnel, disinterred all American remains from the Bolovan Cemetery for identification. The AGRC was unable to identify more than 80 unknowns from Bolovan Cemetery, and those remains were permanently interred at Ardennes American Cemetery and Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery, both in Belgium.

In 2017, DPAA began exhuming unknowns believed to be associated with unaccounted-for

airmen from Operation TIDAL WAVE losses. These remains were sent to the DPAA. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced that U.S. Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Alfred W. Pezzella, 27, of Newton, Massachusetts, killed during World War II, was accounted for April 6, 2023.

Lt. Alfred W. Pezzella was awarded the following medals and citations for his faithful & honorable service while giving the ultimate sacrifice; Distinguished Flying Cross ★ Air Medal ★ Purple Heart ★ World War II Victory Medal ★ American Campaign Medal ★ Army Presidential Unit Citation ★ Army Good Conduct Medal and the ★ European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign.

Born on December 23, 1915, in Newton, Massachusetts, beloved son of Raffaele Pezzella and Consiglia (Anzivino) Pezzella, he was the loving brother to four sisters: Annie DiMurro, Annette Miani Clara, Fantasia, and Katherine Paolini.

Of his 8 nieces, there is one still living, Anne (Fantasia) Ferry, in addition to numerous great nieces and great nephews, and extended family.

Before entering military service, Al was raised in Newton and had attended Newton Schools. He spent his younger years in Newton and for a brief period of time in Watertown before joining the United States Army prior to World War II.

For decades after Al went missing on that fateful day in August of 1943, his mother and sisters wrote letters to the President and Congressional delegation to learn more about what happened to their beloved son and loving brother.

After 80's years, 1st Lt. Alfred W. Pezzella will make his way back home to Newton, Massachusetts on Friday evening October 20th, escorted by his great great nephew, a United States Army Captain. He will receive a "Hero's Welcome Home" at Boston Logan International Airport at 6:20PM.

Those who wish to pay Respect, Tribute and Honor to the Life of 1st Lt. Alfred W. Pezzella may do so in the Mary Catherine Chapel of Brasco & Sons Memorial Funeral Home, 773 Moody Street, WALTHAM, MA, while he is Lying in Repose on Saturday and Sunday Oct. 21st & 22nd from 12Pm until 2PM. The family extends an invitation to all Veterans, Veterans Groups & Associations, as well as the General Public.

On Tuesday October 24th at 11AM all are welcome to pay tribute to 1st Lt. Alfred W. Pezzella by gathering at the Funeral Home on Moody Street in Waltham as his procession will depart for his journey to his final resting place at the Massachusetts Veterans National Cemetery in Bourne. Funeral Services & Burial with full United States Army Air Force Military Honors will be held at the cemetery in Bourne on Tuesday afternoon at 1:30PM.

Excerpts taken from

[hellswenchoperationtidalwave.blogspot.com](http://hellswenchoperationtidalwave.blogspot.com)

and various articles related the Hells Wench Mission

